

MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM) ARE AT INCREASED RISK FOR HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is most often transmitted by blood to blood contact. However, recent reports from Europe and elsewhere suggest that HCV is emerging as a sexually transmitted disease (STD) among HIV-positive MSM.¹⁻²

HIV infection and/or mucosal damage caused by traumatic sexual practices and concurrent STDs may facilitate sexual transmission of HCV.¹

Further, epidemic levels of methamphetamine use—including injection of methamphetamine—among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are contributing to the transmission of HCV and may lead to endemic levels of HCV infection in the MSM population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HCV SCREENING

While not all MSM are at high risk for HCV infection, Hepatitis C testing should be offered to clients who:

- have multiple sexual partners
- are HIV-positive
- have ever injected drugs
- have ever shared drug “works” (such as snorting straws or needles)
- have tattoos and/or body piercing
- have a steady sex partner who is HCV-positive
as well as
- anyone requesting HCV testing

¹ Danta M, Brown D, Dusheiko G, et al. Evidence for sexual transmission of HCV in recent epidemic in HIV-infected men in the UK. Program and abstracts of the 13th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections; February 5-8, 2006; Denver, Colorado. Abstract 86.

² Coutinho R, van de Laar T. Rise in HCV incidence in HIV-infected men who have sex with men in Amsterdam: sexual transmission of difficult-to-treat HCV genotypes 1 and 4. Program and abstracts of the 13th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections; February 5-8, 2006; Denver, Colorado. Abstract 87.